



TIPS

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TREMEMOR

Federal Emergency Management Agency



Anything that can move, fall, or break when your house starts to shake is a home earthquake hazard.

Falling objects and debris are the most common causes of injury during an earthquake. You and your family can reduce the risk of being injured in your home by reducing earthquake hazards. A **Home Hazard Hunt** will help you identify potential hazards that can be reduced or eliminated with little effort and little or no cost.

All family members should participate in the Hunt. Foresight and common sense are all that's required as you go from room to room and imagine what would happen when the earth and house start shaking.

Imagine what would happen when your house starts to shake.

An earthquake may introduce itself with a violent jolt or mild shaking. The first thing you may notice is the swaying of hanging plants or light fixtures, or you may hear the sound of objects wobbling on shelves.

As the shaking grows stronger, hanging plants may swing free of their hooks, bang against walls or windows, or crash to the floor. Objects will fall from shelves, furniture will move about or may top-

Home Hazard Hunt

ple over, ceiling plaster may fall, and windows (particularly large window panes and glass doors) may shatter.

All this commotion occurs because parts of your home and its contents do not move together during an earthquake.

Look for potential hazards in each room and discuss how you can reduce or eliminate these hazards.

- Do any rooms contain tall bookcases or bookshelves? How many things are likely to fall? Which items are heavy enough to cause injury? During a moderate shake, objects may topple from shelves and fall in a vertical path. During a violent shake, heavy objects may be propelled to fall in a diagonal path.

What should you do?

Anchor bookcases and other top-heavy furniture to wall studs using metal angle braces ("L" brackets) and lag screws. Be sure that shelf brackets are fixed to shelves. Additional safety measures include applying strips along the front edge of shelves to hold lightweight objects in place. The easiest thing to do is remove all heavy objects from shelves above the head level of the shortest family member.

- Do you have hanging plants or hanging light fixtures? How are they fastened? Could they swing and hit a window? Could they swing free of their hooks?

As a *minimum precaution*, transfer hanging plants from heavy clay pots to lighter plastic ones and use *closed* hooks on all hanging items.

- Where do you sit or sleep? Is there a heavy picture frame or bookshelf over your bed? Do a little rearranging to ensure a sound sleep and safe awakening.
- What kind of latches are on the kitchen cabinets? Consider replacing magnetic "touch" latches with ones that will hold the cabinet door shut during an earthquake.
- Are there glass bottles in your medicine cabinet or above or around the bathtub? Replace with plastic containers or relocate to low cabinets (use child-proof latches if toddlers are about).

Look for potential hazards in your garage or basement.

Where do you keep flammable products? These items should be located far away from any heat sources.

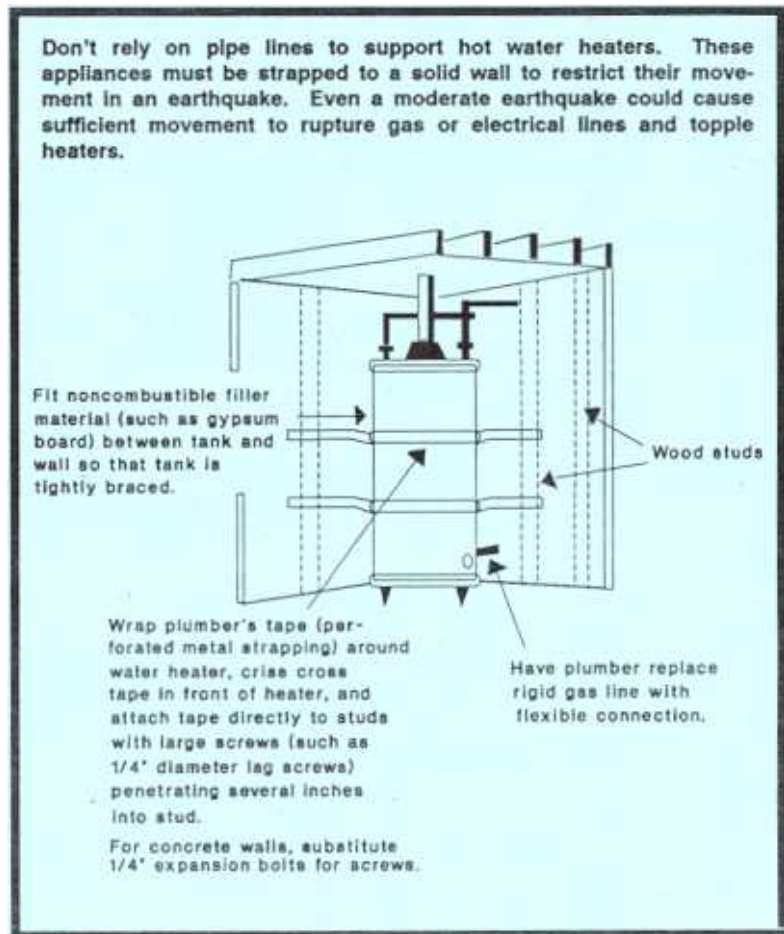
Is your hot water heater secured for earthquake country? To do so is simple and inexpensive. Thin metal tape, known as "plumber's tape," can be used to fasten your hot water heater to the wood studs of the nearest wall.

Check the outside of your home.

- Masonry chimneys are highly susceptible to earthquake damage. If you have a

chimney, determine where those bricks are likely to fall. Through your roof and into a bedroom or family room?

Consider adding a plywood shield to ceiling joists to protect occupants in the room below.



With your powers of perception now finely tuned, conduct your own hazard hunt at your place of work. If you have little or no control over your work environment, at least check to determine if your company has an earthquake safety plan.

When family members are separated during an earthquake or any disaster, each needs to hold on to the assurance that other members can cope and keep safe.